

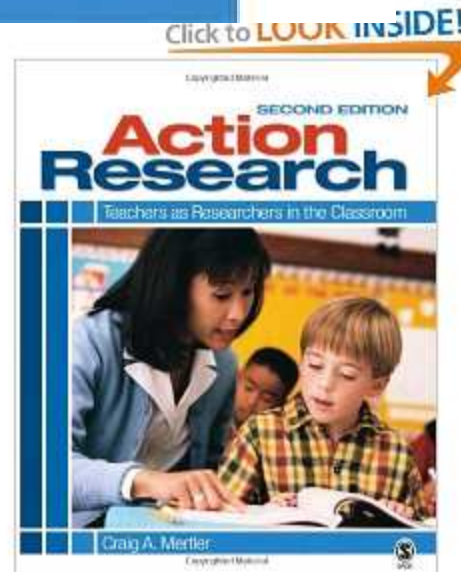
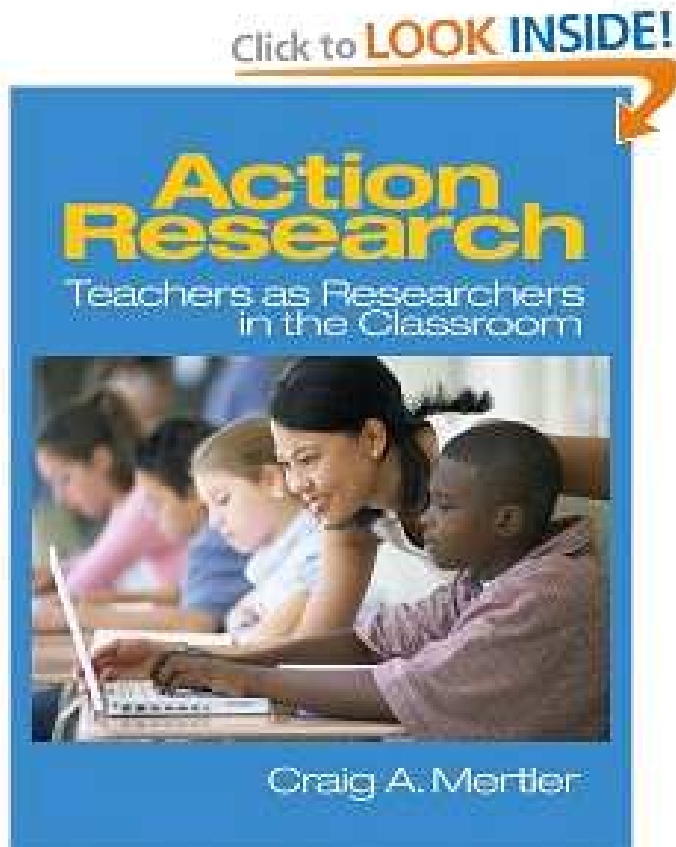
Graduate Reading Seminar Summer Session 1 - 2010

Professor Karen Brooks

How to reach the Professor:

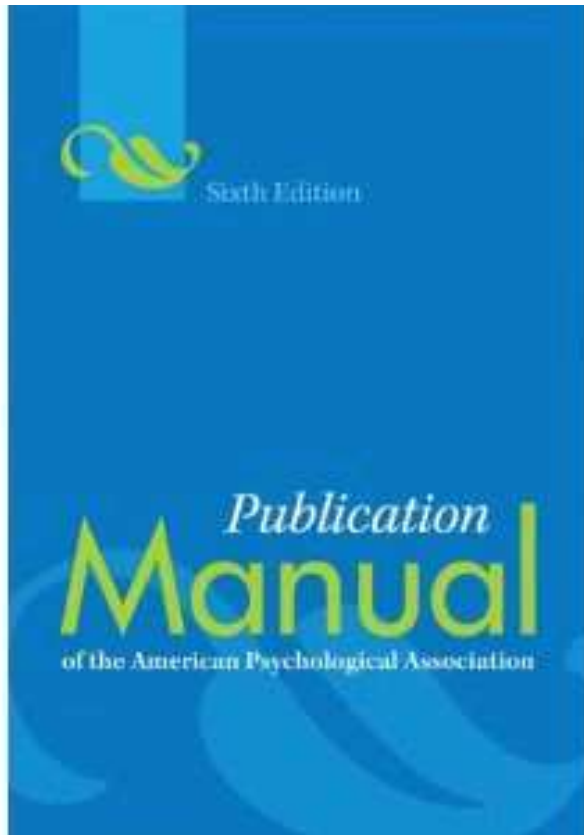
- Professor Karen Brooks
- WebPages:
 - <http://www.karenbrooksucboes.blogspot.com>
 - <http://www.karenbrooks.wikispace.com>
- Social Bookmarking:
 - <http://www.delicious.com/dembeo1/actionresearch>

The Text Book



- Mertler, Craig. (2009). *Action Research: Teachers as researchers in the classroom*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=nVGyeYezjFUC&oi=fnd&pg=PR13&dq=mertler,+Craig+%2B+Action+research&ots=NtCRgwdD4g&sig=J8CrgORH-XqFGnn3pbNuheoa2Uo#v=onepage&q&f=false>

APA 6th Edition



- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th ed.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2009.

Syllabus

CLASS POLICIES

Course Evaluation Guidelines:

- Candidates are expected to attend and participate in class. Ten points will be deducted for each unexplained absence and/or lack of participation.
- All work will be submitted on time. Two points will be deducted, each working day, for late assignments.
- All assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and use 12 point Times New Roman font with 1" margins. All assignments should follow APA guidelines.
- In no case should assignments for this course be ones that have been submitted for another course. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated. These papers will receive no credit points and will not be able to be redone
- **Course Grades will be based on the following requirements:**

Final Research Paper	104 Points
Oral Presentation	16 Points
Writing Assignments	40 Points
Attendance/Participation	40 Points

➤ Grading Procedure:

A	188-200
A-	180-187
B+	174-179
B	168-173
B-	160-167
C+	154-159
C	148-153
C-	140-147
D	134-139
F	< 134

- **Plagiarism & Work Ethic:**
Students are expected to arrive at class **on time and prepared**. All assignments are to be submitted on the **scheduled dates noted in this syllabus**. (Please see the specific assignments in this syllabus). Please use appropriate grammar, sentence/paragraph structure that demonstrates **college/graduate level writing**.

Class Due Dates

Tentative Schedule of Topics to be Covered

Date	Topics	Written Assignments Due
May 26 5:30 pm - 7:25	Course introduction Brainstorm research topics APA Journal Articles	
June 2 5:30 pm - 7:25	<i>Action Research</i> Discuss Chapters 1-4 and Chapter 9 Discuss and finalize research questions	Assignment 1 and 2 due
June 9 5:30 pm - 7:25	Meet in library *** Pending confirmation Room STL 18 (halfway between the library and the Lecture Center on the Concourse Level) Begin research	Assignment 3 due
June 16 5:30 pm - 7:25	Meet in library Continue research	Assignment 4 due
June 24 5:30 pm - 7:25	Presentations 5 minute presentations on progress of action research Discussion of questions/ideas Prepare for Clinical	Assignment 5 due
June 30 th	Final Exam Period – Work on your Research	No Class – Final Exam period
July 7-8 July 12-15 July 19-22 July 26-29 4:30 pm - 6:20	Students will meet with professor for individual conferences once per week Read chapters 4-5 in <i>Action Research</i>	
July 26-29 4:30 pm - 6:20	Students will meet to peer edit papers	

Assignment 1 & 2 - Due June 2nd

- **Assignment 1: Research Question**

- After reading chapter 3 of *Action Research*, revise and narrow the research topic(s) you identified in our first class to two or three questions you might seek to answer. Report these questions in a 1-2 page paper.
- For each question you have come up with discuss the following:
- Is your question narrow enough? Will you have enough time to implement an action research study on this question?
- What topics will you need to research to present a thorough literature review for this question? Brainstorm a list of possible search terms related to your topics.

- **Assignment 2: Observations of Journal Article**

- **Examples:** IRA and NCTE
- Chose two articles from the journal you received in class. Read and analyze these articles as a writer. Write a 1-2 page paper discussing the following:
- The style of the writing
- The tone and voice of the authors
- How the authors synthesize information
- How the authors incorporate citations into the body of the paper
- How the authors report methodology
- How the authors report data
- Consider writings you have done in this graduate program thus far. What do you need to do to move your own writing more toward the style and tone of these professional articles?

- **Writing Assignment 3: Action Research Paper Proposal**

- Write a brief 1-2 page proposal that describes the focus of your paper and how you plan to carry out your research. Using your reading of Chapter 4 and 5 as a guide, write your ideas for conducting an action research study for your question. How will you use qualitative research/quantitative research? How will you collect data? You will need more than one source of data. Be sure to consider several different forms your data can take: observations, checklists, tests, interviews, etc.
- *Include a list of at least 10 initial sources with your proposal.*
- **Due June 9th**

- **Writing Assignment 4: Synthesis of Research**

- Based on the research you have collected thus far, write a 1-2 page paper synthesizing your findings. Consider how studies you have found fit together, what the big ideas that connect the research are, and how the research relates to your topic. Remember, you are not just a reporter of information gathered. It is your job to explain to your reader what this research means in the context of your study. This is an excellent opportunity to practice citing information correctly inside the body of a paper using APA.

- **Due June 16th**

- **Writing Assignment 5: Introductory Portion of a Draft**

- Prepare a 4-5 page introductory draft of your paper. Include an explanation or outline of following sections and notes on particular problems or questions you have encountered while writing this paper. Be sure to cite information within the body of the paper following APA guidelines.

- **Due June 24**



The Book

Browse SAGE

COURSES

SUBJECTS

- ▶ Academic and Student Resources
- ▶ African American Studies
- ▶ Business
- ▶ Communication and Media Studies
- ▶ Counseling
- ▶ Criminology/Criminal Justice
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Geography
- ▶ Gerontology & Aging
- ▶ Health
- ▶ Human Development & Family Studies
- ▶ Political Science
- ▶ Psychology
- ▶ Research Methods, Statistics, and Evaluation
- ▶ Social Work
- ▶ Sociology
- ▶ Women's Studies

Craig A. Mertler

Craig A. Mertler is currently a Professor and Director of the Doctoral Program in School Improvement at the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, GA. He teaches doctoral courses in action research, quantitative research methods, introductory statistical analysis, multivariate statistical analysis, and educational assessment methods. He is the author of 5 books, 4 invited book chapters, 15 refereed journal articles, and numerous nonrefereed articles and manuscripts. He has also presented numerous research papers at professional meetings around the country, as well as internationally.

Before teaching and researching at the university level, he taught high school biology and earth science, where he also coached track and volleyball and advised various student groups.

Dr. Mertler consults with schools and districts and conducts professional development sessions on classroom-based action research, professional learning communities, and on the broad topic of classroom assessment. His primary professional interests and areas of expertise include:

- classroom-based, teacher-led action research
- data-driven instructional decision making (at the P-12 level)
- professional learning communities
- classroom teachers' assessment literacy, and
- assessment practices of classroom teachers

Dr. Mertler welcomes any and all opportunities to continue his work with schools. He can be reached at the University of West Georgia's College of Education, Room 251 Education Center, Carrollton, GA 30118; cmertler@westga.edu.

Affiliations:

-University of West Georgia

Craig A. Mertler has a Web Site at:

Resources for...

- ▶ Book Authors/Editors
- ▶ Booksellers
- ▶ Faculty
- ▶ Freelancers
- ▶ Journal Editors/Authors
- ▶ Librarians
- ▶ Societies & Assn.
- ▶ Subscription Agents
- ▶ Translation and Subsidiary Rights
- ▶ Permissions
- ▶ Product Marketers

Extras

- ▶ Create Profile
- ▶ Register for Email Alerts
- ▶ Request Catalog

BOOKS: 3 Products

	Title	Lead Author/Editor	Pub Date ▲	Price
	BUNDLE: Mertler: Action Research, 2e + Samaras: Self-Study Teacher Research	Craig A. Mertler	04-22-2010	\$69.95
	Action Research, Second Edition  Teachers as Researchers in the Classroom	Craig A. Mertler	07-03-2008	\$49.95
	Interpreting Standardized Test Scores  Strategies for Data-Driven Instructional Decision Making	Craig A. Mertler	04-13-2007	\$43.95

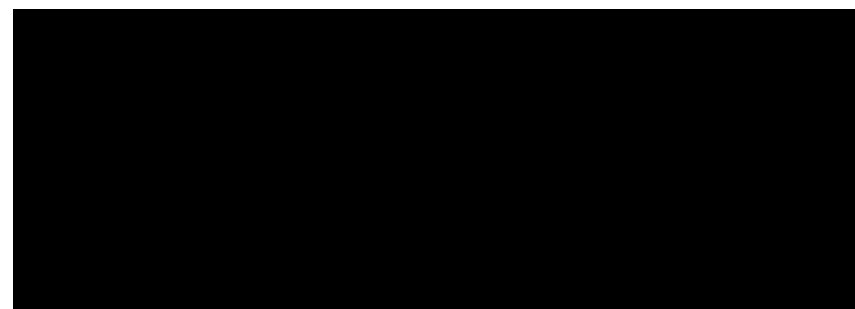
The Author's Resources

- http://web.me.com/mertler/Dr._Mertlers_Podcasts/School_Improvement_%26_Reform/School_Improvement_%26_Reform.html
- Action Research Community - <http://action-research-community.wikispaces.com/>
- Student Study Site - <http://www.sagepub.com/mertler2study/>
- Planning Flash Cards - <http://www.sagepub.com/mertler2study/01/flashcards.htm>
- Web Resources: <http://www.sagepub.com/mertler2study/01/webres.htm>
-

BRIEF CONTENTS

Preface	xiii
Acknowledgments	xxi
 PART I. "WHAT IS ACTION RESEARCH?"	 1
1. Introduction to Action Research	3
2. Overview of the Action Research Process	29
 PART II. "HOW DO I BEGIN MY ACTION RESEARCH STUDY?"	 43
3. Planning for Action Research	45
4. Developing a Research Plan	71
 PART III. "WHAT DO I DO WITH ALL THESE DATA?"	 103
5. Collecting Data	105
6. Analyzing Data	139
 PART IV. "I'VE GOT RESULTS! . . . NOW WHAT?"	 177
7. Developing an Action Plan	179
8. Sharing and Reflecting	191
9. Writing Up Action Research	211
 Appendix A. Sample Action Research Report: The Effects of De-Emphasizing Grades on the Achievement and Stress Levels of Students in Health Class	 227
 Appendix B. Sample Action Research Report: Assessing the Assessments—What Really Works? An Action Research Report	 233

Preface	xiii
Acknowledgments	xxi
PART I. “WHAT IS ACTION RESEARCH?”	1
1. Introduction to Action Research	3
Chapter 1 Organizer	3
What Is Action Research?	4
Introduction to Educational Research	5
Overview of Educational Research	7
Overview of Action Research	12
Models of Action Research	13
Characteristics of Action Research: What It Is and What It Is Not	18
The Importance of Action Research	19
Connecting Theory to Practice	20
Improvement of Educational Practice	21
Teacher Empowerment—Teacher as Decision Maker	21
Professional Growth	22
Applications of Action Research	22
Identifying Problems	22
Developing and Testing Solutions	22
Preservice Teacher Education	23
Inservice Professional Growth	24
“Rigor” in Action Research	24
Related Web Sites: What Is Action Research?	26
Summary	27
Questions and Activities	28
Web-Based Study Site	28



xviii ACTION RESEARCH

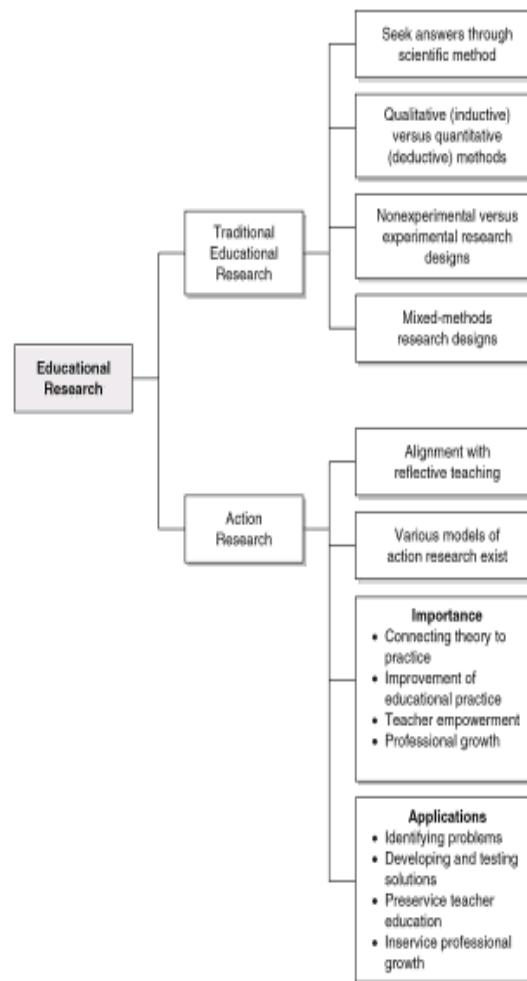
For a typical 15-week academic term, I might suggest the following week-by-week activities, for both content coverage of the book and the associated action research project:

<i>Week</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Project Activity</i>
1	Introduction to the course and to action research	
2	Chapter 1—Overview of research	Brainstorm list of possible research topics
3	Chapter 1—Continued Chapter 2—Overview of action research	Continue brainstorming, discussing possible topics with instructor
4	Chapter 3—Topic refinement	Begin process of narrowing topic
5	Chapter 3—Reviewing related literature	Begin search for related literature
6	Chapter 4—Developing a research plan	Continue reviewing related literature; develop preliminary research design
7	Chapter 5—Data collection	Draft instrumentation, interview guides, etc.
8	Chapter 5—Continued	Revise instrumentation, interview guides with instructor
9	Chapter 6—Data analysis	Begin data collection
10	Chapter 6—Continued	Data collection continues
11	Chapter 7—Developing action plans	Data collection continues; begin data analysis
12	Chapter 8—Sharing and reflecting	Data analysis continues; draft action plan
13	Chapter 9—Writing up results of action research	Finalize action plan; begin writing final paper
14	Informal presentations of projects and results	Complete written report
15	Submit final written report	

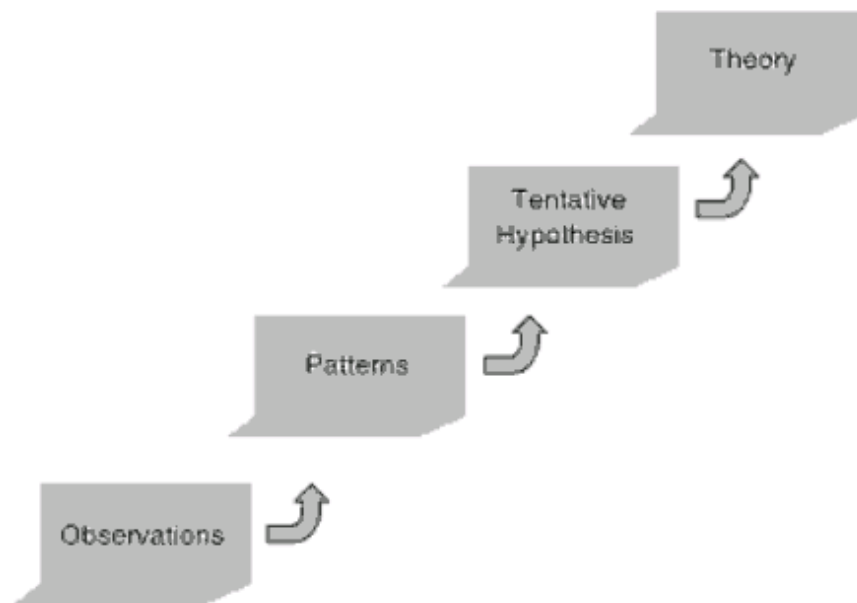
For a typical 10-week academic term, I might suggest the following week-by-week activities:

<i>Week</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Project Activity</i>
1	Introduction to the course and to action research	
2	Chapter 1—Overview of research	Brainstorm list of possible research topics
3	Chapter 2—Overview of action research	Continue brainstorming, discussing possible topics with instructor
4	Chapter 3—Topic refinement and reviewing related literature Chapter 4—Developing a research plan	Begin process of narrowing topic; search for related literature; develop preliminary research design
5	Chapter 5—Data collection	Continue reviewing related literature; draft and revise instrumentation, interview guides, etc.
6	Chapter 6—Data analysis Chapter 7—Developing action plans	Data collection; begin data analysis
7	Chapter 8—Sharing and reflecting	Draft action plan
8	Chapter 9—Writing up results of action research	Finalize action plan; begin writing final paper Complete written report
9	Informal presentations of projects and results	
10	Submit final written report	

Introduction to Action Research



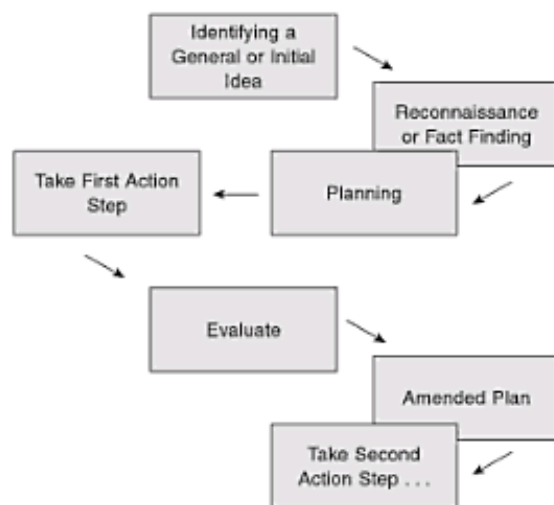
Chapter 1 • Introduction to Action Research

Figure 1.2 Process of Inductive Reasoning as Applied to Research

Source: Adapted from Trochim, 2002a.

Types of research
Page 9-11.

Figure 1.4 Lewin's Action Research Spiral



Source: Adapted from *Encyclopedia of Informal Education* (www.infed.org). Copyright 2007. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

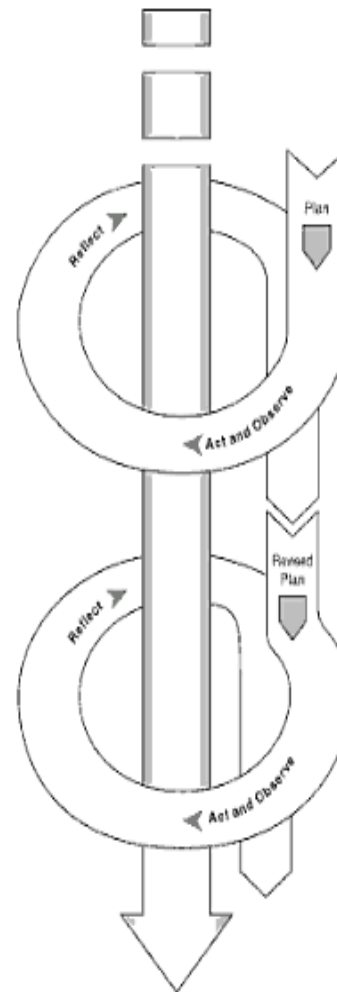
Figure 1.5 Calhoun's Action Research Cycle



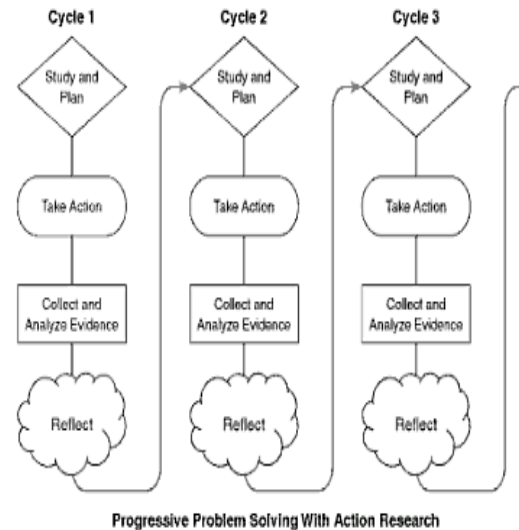
Source: Adapted from *How to Use Action Research in the Self-Renewing School* (p. 2), by Emily F. Calhoun, 1994, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Copyright 1994 by ASCD. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

through four steps in each cycle: planning, taking action, collecting evidence, and reflecting (see Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.6 Bachman's Action Research Spiral



Source: Adapted from "Review of the Agricultural Knowledge System in Fiji: Opportunities and Limitations of Participatory Methods and Platforms to Promote Innovation Development" (unpublished dissertation), by Lorenz Bachman, 2001, Berlin, Germany: Humboldt University to Berlin, Copyright 2001. Retrieved January 17, 2008, from <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/dissertationen/bachmann-lorenz-b-r-2000-12-21/HTML/bachmann-ch3.html>. Reprinted with permission of the author.

Figure 1.7 Riel's Action Research Model

Source: Adapted from *Understanding Action Research*, by Margaret Riel. Retrieved January 17, 2008, from <http://cades.pepperdine.edu/ccar/define.html>. Copyright 2007 by the Center for Collaborative Action Research, Pepperdine University. Reprinted with permission of the author.

- Eileen Piggot-Irvine's (2006) *action research model* continues to depict this spiraling nature of the action research process. In her upward spiral, she shows these similar steps—planning, acting, and reflecting—through three subsequent action research cycles (see Figure 1.8).
- Cher Hendricks's (2006) *action research model* is shown in Figure 1.9. In her model, which she has placed in a school-based context, she focuses on acting, evaluating, and reflecting.

Which model should you follow? Personally, I do not think it really matters, as I see them essentially as variations on the same theme (as evidenced by their shared elements). Generally speaking, my version of the action research process is composed of a four-stage procedure (Mertler & Charles, 2008), which will be expanded in more detail in the next chapter. For the time being, these four stages are as follows:

1. The **planning stage**
2. The **acting stage**
3. The **developing stage**
4. The **reflecting stage**

Figure 1.9 Hendricks's Action Research Process



Source: Adapted from *Improving Schools Through Action Research: A Comprehensive Guide for Educators* (p. 9), by Cher Hendricks, 2006, Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Characteristics of Action Research: What It Is and What It Is Not

Although action research can be a fairly straightforward process, it is sometimes misunderstood by educational practitioners (Mertler & Charles, 2008). There are many aspects of this methodology that characterize its uniqueness as an approach to conducting educational research. It is imperative for educators to have a sound, foundational understanding of just what action research is and is not. The following list, compiled from several sources (Johnson, 2008; Mertler & Charles, 2008; Mills, 2007; Schmuck, 1997), is an attempt to describe what action research is:

- Action research *is* a process that improves education, in general, by incorporating change.
- Action research *is* a process involving educators working together to improve their own practices.
- Action research *is* persuasive and authoritative, since it is done by teachers for teachers.
- Action research *is* collaborative; that is, it is composed of educators talking and working with other educators in empowering relationships.
- Action research *is* participative, since educators are integral members—not disinterested outsiders—of the research process.

- Action research *is* practical and relevant to classroom teachers, since it allows them direct access to research findings.
- Action research *is* developing critical reflection about one's teaching.
- Action research *is* a planned, systematic approach to understanding the learning process.
- Action research *is* a process that requires us to “test” our ideas about education.
- Action research *is* open-minded.
- Action research *is* a critical analysis of educational places of work.
- Action research *is* a cyclical process of planning, acting, developing, and reflecting.
- Action research *is* a justification of one's teaching practices.

Of equal importance is that educators understand what action research *is not* (Johnson, 2008; Mertler & Charles, 2008; Mills, 2007; Schmuck, 1997):

- Action research *is not* the usual thing that teachers do when thinking about teaching; it is more systematic and more collaborative.
- Action research *is not* simply problem solving; it involves the specification of a problem, the development of something new (in most cases), and critical reflection on its effectiveness.
- Action research *is not* done “to” or “by” other people; it is research done by particular educators, on their own work, with students and colleagues.
- Action research *is not* the simple implementation of predetermined answers to educational questions; it explores, discovers, and works to find creative solutions to educational problems.
- Action research *is not* conclusive; the results of action research are neither right nor wrong but rather tentative solutions that are based on observations and other data collection and that require monitoring and evaluation in order to identify strengths and limitations.
- Action research *is not* a fad; good teaching has always involved the systematic examination of the instructional process and its effects on student learning. Teachers are always looking for ways to improve instructional practice, and although teachers seldom have referred to this process of observation, revision, and reflection as *research*, that is exactly what it is.

Chapter One Summary

- Chapter 1: Introduction to Action Research: Chapter Summary
- Educational research involves the application of the scientific method to educational problems.
 - Answers to questions typically come from common sources, such as tradition, authority, and common sense.
 - The scientific method is a more systematic, objective procedure for finding answers to questions.
 - Traditional research is often conducted by individuals who are somewhat removed from the environment they are studying.
- Two broad types of research methods are quantitative and qualitative.
 - Quantitative research methodologies require the collection of numerical data and utilize a deductive approach to reasoning; they include both nonexperimental (e.g., descriptive, correlational, causal-comparative research) and experimental designs.
 - Qualitative research methodologies require the collection of narrative data and utilize an inductive approach to reasoning; they include phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case studies.
 - Mixed-methods research designs combine both quantitative and qualitative types of data.
- Action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by educators for the purpose of gathering information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how their students learn.
 - Action research is done *by* teachers *for* teachers, working with students and colleagues.
 - Teacher reflection is an integral part of action research.
 - The basic process of action research consists of the following four stages: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting.
 - Most action research studies are cyclical and iterative
 - Action research can be used effectively to bridge the gap between theory and practice, to improve educational practice, to empower teachers, to provide professional growth opportunities for teachers, to identify educational problems, to develop and test solutions, and to expand the knowledge base of preservice teachers.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Action Research from the course book's
author

What is Action Research?

- Systematic inquiry conducted by educators with vested interest in the teaching–learning process or environment for purposes of gathering information about how their school operates, how they teach, and how their students learn
- Research done *by* teachers *for* themselves
- Systematic inquiry into one's own practices
- Research then has increased utility, effectiveness

Introduction to Educational Research

- Classroom teachers are most likely consumers of research
- Research is one means of seeking answers to questions
- Familiar sources of information for our questions
 - Tradition
 - Authority
 - Common sense
- Familiar sources tend to provide unreliable information
- Really need information that is valid and reliable

Introduction to Educational Research (*cont.*)

- Scientific method—systematic method of answering questions more objectively
 - Clarify main question/problem
 - State a hypothesis
 - Collect, analyze, and interpret information
 - Form conclusions
 - Use conclusions to verify/reject the hypothesis
- Educational research—application of scientific method to educational topics or questions
 - Process very similar to scientific method...

Introduction to Educational Research (*cont.*)

- Generic process of educational research:
 - Specify the topic
 - Clarify the specific problem on which the research will focus
 - Formulate research questions and/or hypotheses
 - Carry out procedures to collect, analyze, and interpret *data*
 - State findings resulting from data analyses
 - Draw conclusions related back to questions/hypotheses
- Must be aware of differences between *science* and *pseudoscience*

Overview of Educational Research

- Traditional research in education typically conducted by individuals somewhat removed from environment being studied
- Numerous *research methods* exist
- Typically classified into two categories:
 - Quantitative research methods
 - Require numerical data
 - Utilize *deductive reasoning* ('top-down' approach)
 - Qualitative research methods
 - Require narrative data
 - Utilize *inductive reasoning* ('bottom-up' approach)

Overview of Educational Research (*cont.*)

- Quantitative research:
 - Measure variables in order to test hypotheses or answer research questions
 - Research designs may be *nonexperimental* or *experimental*:
 - Nonexperimental designs:
 - No direct control over variables (i.e., no manipulation)
 - Descriptive studies or designs
 - Comparative studies or designs
 - Correlational studies or designs
 - Causal-comparative studies or designs

Overview of Educational Research

(cont.)

- Experimental designs:
 - Researcher has control over one or more variables
 - Independent and dependent variables
 - Experimental (or treatment) and control (or comparison) groups
 - Descriptive and inferential statistics
 - Statistical significance
 - Samples versus populations

Overview of Educational Research (*cont.*)

- Qualitative research:
 - Broader, more holistic approach to research
 - No control or manipulation of variables
 - Triangulation is a key process
 - Utilizes logico-inductive analysis
 - Numerous research designs exist:
 - Phenomenological studies
 - Ethnographic studies
 - Grounded theory research
 - Case studies

Overview of Educational Research

(cont.)

- Mixed-methods research:
 - Studies that combine both quantitative and qualitative data
 - Many individuals consider action research studies to be most similar to mixed-methods research (than purely quantitative or qualitative research)

Overview of Action Research

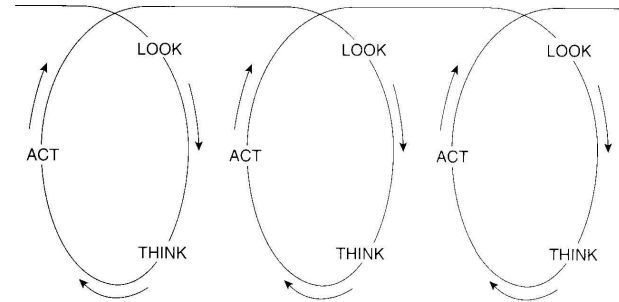
- Call for school improvement...
 - Mass media and public outcry
 - Lack of applicability of more traditional research findings
 - Serious need for increased practice of teacher-led, classroom-based action research
- Action research
 - Focused on solving specific classroom or school problems, improving practice, or helping to make decisions at a local site
 - Overarching goal is to improve practice immediately

Overview of Action Research (*cont.*)

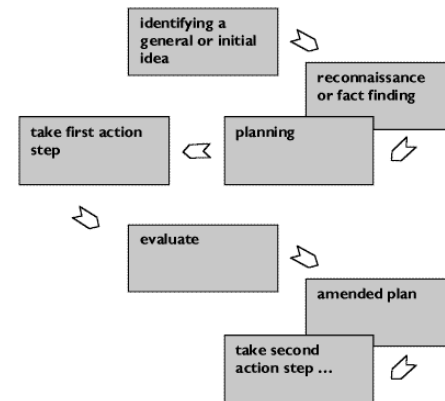
- Reflection...
 - Act of critically examining one's own practice (i.e., what you do, why you do it, what are its effects)
 - Integral part of action research process
 - Reflective teaching—process of developing lessons with thoughtful consideration of theory, existing research, and practical experience, along with examination of lesson's effect on student learning
 - Process of systematic collection of information followed by active reflection, with the anticipation of improving the teaching–learning process is at *the core of action research*

Models of Action Research

- Stringer's interacting spiral

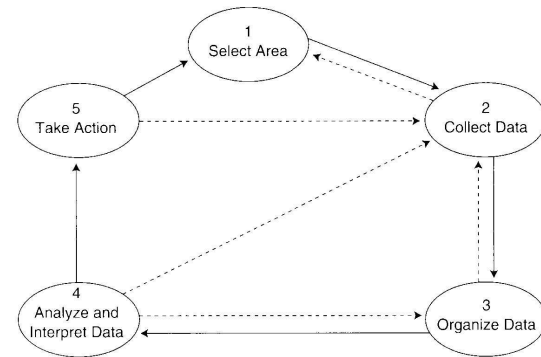


- Lewin's action research spiral

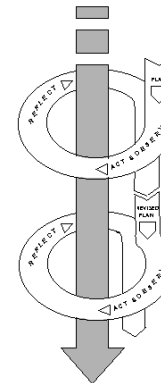


Models of Action Research (*cont.*)

- Calhoun's action research cycle

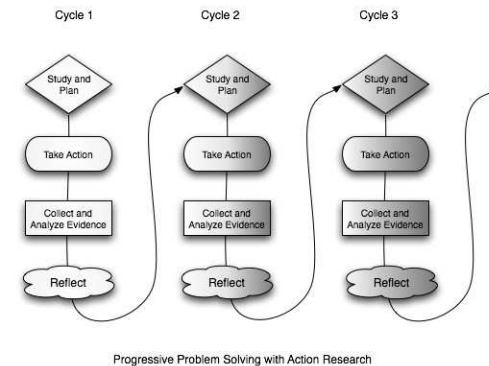


- Bachman's action research spiral

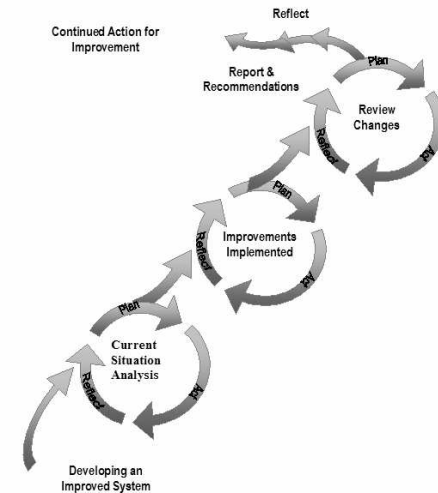


Models of Action Research (*cont.*)

- Riehl's action research model

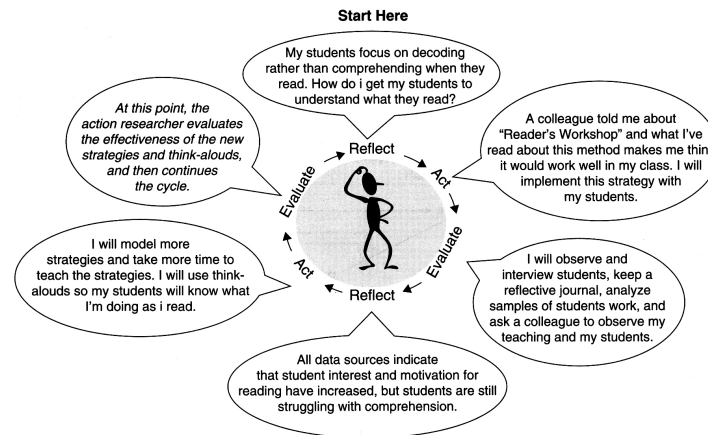


- Piggot-Irvine's action research model



Models of Action Research (*cont.*)

- Hendrick's action research model



- Mertler's model...

- planning—acting—developing—reflecting

Overview of Action Research (*cont.*)

- Characteristics of action research
 - What it is...
 - What it is not...
- Importance of action research
 - Connecting theory to practice
 - Improvement of educational practice
 - Teacher empowerment
 - Professional growth

Overview of Action Research (*cont.*)

- Applications of action research
 - Identifying problems
 - Developing and testing solutions
 - Preservice teacher education
 - Inservice professional growth
- Rigor in action research
 - Quality, validity, accuracy, and credibility of action research and its findings
 - Determination of rigor often depends on intended audience for sharing results

Overview of Action Research (*cont.*)

- Rigor in action research (*cont.*)
 - Broader dissemination—should be more concerned with generalizability
 - Narrower dissemination—may be no generalizable results
- Methods of providing rigor in action research
 - Repetition of the cycle
 - Prolonged engagement and persistent observation
 - Experience with the process
 - Triangulation of data
 - Member checking
 - Participant debriefing

Suggestions

- Use BlackBoard!!!
- Keep in touch with the Professor!!
- Do NOT fall behind!!!
- Use
<http://karenbrooks.wikispaces.com/Research+Tool+Kit> The Research Tool Kit